

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07

OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 DRC-01 /166 W

----- 066178

R 101850Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6990

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: HEATH TO DISCUSS WITH TUC LEADERS THEIR
PROPOSAL ON ENDING INDUSTRIAL CRISIS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE PRIME MINISTER HAS INVITED TUC
LEADERS TO 10 DOWNING STREET TONIGHT (JANUARY 10) TO
DISCUSS A TUC OFFER THAT ITS AFFILIATES WOULD NOT USE A
SETTLEMENT WITH THE MINERS AS A BASIS FOR THEIR OWN
WAGE CLAIMS. THE TUC BELIEVES ITS OFFER WILL END THE
INDUSTRIAL CRISIS. IT CAME AS THE MINERS UNANIMOUSLY
DECIDED TO CONTINUE THEIR OVERTIME BAN AND THE
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LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS HAVE ESCALATED THEIR INDUSTRIAL

ACTION BY REFUSING TO TAKE OUT TRAINS IN THE FACE OF
A "TOUGHEN UP" POLICY OF BRITISH RAIL. END SUMMARY

2. THE TUC HAD CALLED UPON HEATH TO DISCUSS ITS
PROPOSAL MADE AT A MEETING YESTERDAY AFTERNOON
(JANUARY 9) OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL (NEDC) THAT IF THE MINERS WERE TREATED AS A
SPECIAL CASE AND GIVEN A PAY INCREASE OUTSIDE STAGE
THREE LIMITS, OTHER UNIONS WOULD NOT USE THIS AS A
LEVER TO SECURE HIGHER WAGE SETTLEMENTS.

3. SIR SIDNEY GREENE, CHAIRMAN OF THE TUC ECONOMIC
COMMITTEE, WHO WILL BE IN THE GROUP MEETING WITH HEATH
TONIGHT, TOLD US THAT "THE TUC HAD NEVER MADE SUCH
AN OFFER BEFORE." HE FURTHER CLARIFIED THE PROPOSAL
BY STATING THAT "WHAT WE REALLY SAID IS THAT WE WERE
PREPARED TO GIVE AN UNDERTAKING THAT IF A SPECIAL
SETTLEMENT WERE MADE WITH THE MINERS, WE WOULD NOT USE
SETTLEMENT OR QUOTE IT IN ANY WAY. WE ARE NOT ASKING
THE GOVERNMENT TO ABANDON STAGE THREE NOR ARE WE
PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT." THE TUC OFFER, SIR SIDNEY
NOTED, WAS MADE, IN PART, TO COUNTER THE GOVERNMENT
ARGUMENT THAT IF A SPECIAL SETTLEMENT WERE MADE WITH
THE NUM, IT WOULD "OPEN THE FLOODGATES" TO OTHER
CLAIMS. (THE TUC LEADERS, GREENE SAID, WHO AGREED
TO THE PROPOSAL INCLUDED JACK JONES AND HUGH SCANLON,
LEADERS OF TWO OF THE TUC'S LARGEST UNIONS.)

4. THE NUM EXECUTIVE, MEETING TODAY (JAN. 10) IN THE
WAKE OF THE UNSUCCESSFUL MEETING WITH WHITELAW
YESTERDAY (LONDON'S 0374), VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO
CONTINUE THEIR OVERTIME BAN BUT REJECTED PROPOSALS
FROM LEFT-WINGERS TO EXCALATE THEIR INDUSTRIAL ACTION.
(IN HIS TALK WITH THE NUM EXECUTIVE YESTERDAY,
WHITELAW HAD AGAIN URGED THE MINERS TO ACCEPT THE
COAL BOARD'S LAST OFFER OF UP TO 16-L/2 PERCENT
WITHIN STAGE THREE, BUT PROMISED THAT ONCE THEY ENDED
THEIR OVERTIME BAN, AN EXPLORATION ON FUTURE PROSPECTS
AND EARNINGS WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN, INCLUDING CONSIDERA-
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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TION OF SPECIAL EXTRA BENEFITS AS WELL AS RESEARCH ON
HEALTH AND WORKING HAZARDS.)

5. WHILE THE MINERS' DISPUTE STILL REMAINS DEADLOCKED,
THE LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND FIREMEN (ASLEF) HAVE
ESCALATED THEIR DISPUTE FOLLOWING A DECISION BY BRITISH
RAIL TO TOUGHEN ITS POLICY BY SENDING HOME THOSE DRIVERS
WHO REFUSED TO TAKE OUT TRAINS ON THE GROUNDS THAT
THESE WERE "UNSUITABLE" FOR OPERATION. MANY TRAIN
DRIVERS WALKED OUT WHEN THEIR COLLEAGUES WERE SENT
HOME AND THIS HAS DRASTICALLY CURTAILED SERVICE ON THE
SOUTHERN REGION AND PART OF THE EASTERN REGION OF
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BRITISH RAIL. SIR SIDNEY, WHO IS ALSO LEADER OF THE

MUCH LARGER RAIL UNION, THE NATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYMEN (NUR), AND WHO IS VERY MUCH OUT OF SYMPATHY WITH ASLEF'S INDUSTRIAL ACTION, DISCOUNTED THE FORCE OF ASLEF'S ACTION. IN HIS VIEW, THE INDUSTRIAL ACTION WOULD REMAIN LARGELY CONFINED TO THE SOUTHERN REGION AND THAT "THE LOCOMOTIVE DRIVERS WILL BE BACK IN A COUPLE OF DAYS."

6. SIR LEONARD NEAL, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, ALSO DISCOUNTED THE EFFECTS OF THE ASLEF ACTION BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH IT IS VERY DISRUPTIVE, ASLEF ENGINEERS DROVE MOSTLY PASSENGER TRAINS, AND COULD NOT, ON THEIR OWN ACCOUNT, GIVE THE ECONOMY AN OVERWHELMING BLOW.

7. COMMENT: APART FROM THESE ASSESSMENTS OF THE GRAVITY OF THE LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS' ACTION, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PROBLEM NUMBER ONE REMAINS THE DEAD-LOCKED COAL DISPUTE. THE HEATH-TUC MEETING TONIGHT WILL BE STILL ANOTHER EFFORT TO END THE DEADLOCK. IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR, AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, WHETHER THE HEATH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT TUC ASSURANCES OF RESTRAINT WHICH REMAIN -- IN SIR SIDNEY'S OWN CLARIFICATION -- SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS. HOWEVER, IF THE GOVERNMENT IS READY TO DISCUSS THE TUC PROPOSALS IN DETAIL, APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE TO GIVE TUC ASSURANCES MORE STRENGTH COULD BE FOUND.

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